



Retrieval at the Docks

or

Thank You, Public Transport

Mission title:	<i>Retrieval at the Docks, or Thank You, Public Transport</i>
Mission log:	1-01, 1-02
Mission Johnson:	Mario the Plumber (Fixer)
Mission reward, first part:	8,000 nuyen, 2 karma
Mission reward, second part:	12,000 nuyen, 2 karma
Participants, first part:	Cogwhistle, Dr. Farsight, Jinx, Ricardo, Schneider, Vince
Participants, second part:	Cogwhistle, Dr. Farsight, Jinx, (The) Schneider, Vince

Table of Contents

1-01: Setup	1
1-02: Trekking to the Target.....	4
1-02: Breaching the Docks.....	4
1-02: Preparing the Battlefield is Half the Battle, Or So I've Been Told	5
1-02: Smash and Grab by Proxy	7
1-02: A Sudden Ambush	9
1-02: A Show of Force	13
1-02: Grabbing the Package(s)	13
1-02: Delivering the Package(s).....	15
1-02: Loose Threads and Musings.....	16
Bonus map.....	17



1-01: Setup

It's February 21st, 2058, Seattle. Ever since the death of Don James O'Malley and the attempt on Rowena O'Malley's life in January, an anticipatory hush has settled in the Seattle underground.

The Irish-style bar "Dirty Nelly" in Tacoma is no exception. Our "heroes" (using the term loosely) are there, quietly working on their decided levels of intoxication. Some other clientele are there too, keeping the bottom line for the owner up. An old man is crying in the corner, probably because he's the only one there that knows the words to *Finnegan's Wake*.



Suddenly, various twittering noises and obnoxious beeps indicate that our protagonists have received new messages on their pocket secretaries. The message is short, and to the point. Mario the Plumber (no, not *that* Mario the Plumber) has a need of a group of individuals of negotiable loyalty for a simple and local smash-and-grab job. Immediately, hackles raise. A simple job? When it seems too good to be true, it usually is. Though Mario hasn't lead anyone astray so far (and *as far as they know*), every time can be the first one.

Beers are emptied, either down the gullet or down the sink, depending on whether the person's a lightweight or not. The troll, of course, happily chugs down his beer boot, downing twice the amount of fluid that anyone else would even consider. His mass, coupled with his advanced cyberware and bioware modifications reduces the impact of a half gallon of beer to a belch, and a trip to the men's room. He isn't even swaying as he makes his way over to the piss trough.



Pretty soon, the quiet humming of the ethanol engine in Mario's plumber van is audible, closely followed by the later model van appearing around the corner. With expert Italian-style nonchalance, Mario illegally parks his *GMC Celine 2055* close to the street corner of Dirty Nelly's entrance. It's highly unlikely that any rentacop will pop up, and even more unlikely that the rentacop will care about a double-parked vehicle in front of this particular bar in this particular neighborhood – and that goes twice for a pretty nondescript (though newish) plumber's van.



Mario pops out of the van. Chewing on a much-abused, unlit cigar, he opens the double back doors of the van, and waves you into his meeting room. It's biz time. The mirrored shades go on, and the pink mohawks are subdued – at least for now. There's little time for shenanigans now. Biz is biz. Even if one isn't a *professional* – not really – you still want to get paid, and paid good.





The gravelly voice of Mario with his Italian lilt distractingly present, clearly and precisely lays out today's – or rather, this *night's* – run.

In a particular warehouse on the docks, there's two coffin-sized (about 2m long, 1m wide, and 0.5m tall) boxes, about 150 kg each, who need retrieval, preferably with the seal still in place. They're marked with Ψ . They will be gone by 08:00 tomorrow, and is likely irretrievable if that happens. So that's bad. Because then all the orphan nuyen won't find its way into your pockets. Getting nuyen into your pockets is clearly a worthwhile exercise, and this seems to be a doable task. Deliver the crates to a parking garage in Bellevue, close to the Barrens, and you're golden.

For some reason, noone's got any questions. Mario gives you credsticks of 8,000 nuyen each, a sizable downpayment on the run, and then promptly shoos you out of his van. In a flash, faster than a starving Italian looking for his mother's pasta, he's inside the van, and in classic casual style tags a garbage can with his bumper on his way out of the neighborhood.

By some unspoken agreement, you all pop off to your respective dosses to fetch your kit. Half an hour later, you converge outside Dirty Nelly's again. It's getting late, Seattle's slowing down – but you're geared up and there's biz to be done.





1-02: Trekking to the Target

Out comes the bus passes. Seattle's Public Transit Authority has semi-automated buses to the docks, even this late at night. And our heroes decide to heroically take the bus to the docks, while planning illegal stuff on the bus. Luckily, there's no one else on the bus. It is fairly late, and the night shift on the dock recently started their shift.

Sometime while on the bus, they realize that Ricardo never showed up after traipsing off to pick up his kit. This is mildly annoying, but they decide that it's not enough to scrub the mission. After all, that means that the completion bonus is divided on one less, right? Noone's paranoid enough to suggest that he's sold them out. He better not have. If he has, he's one geeked backstabby ex-chummer. Divvying out comm gear, the troll explains how the encryption works.

The bus pulls up to a bus shelter next to a gate leading into the docks. Hey, at least taking the bus is environmentally friendly, *neh*? With a final comms check, they disembark the robot bus.

1-02: Breaching the Docks

The entrance to the docks is fairly well-lit. Further on the docks there's some activity. The docks are never completely empty. Commerce waits for no metahuman. A mesh fence wired with cutting sensors and topped with laser-lit monowire (for safety *and* security) and gate cameras, shows that security, though passive, isn't light.

A parking lot for dockworkers and other employees is right inside a security gate. It is mostly empty, with only one beat-up, older Ford Americar parked here. Next to the parking lot, there's a three story administration building, weathered and with some grass peeking up of the gravel on the roof.

A sign on the security gate warns that the entire dock area is under Corporate Court extraterritoriality. Whatever happens, it won't be the rentacops responding.

The Schneider's the first one that snaps out of it. The bus has barely left the corner when she's off running, crouching down, to get out of any camera angles. A nearby dumpster offers some cover. She pulls out her gear, carefully examines the mesh fence, pulls out some crocodile clips and wire, and starts carefully rerouting the cutting sensors, cutting as she goes.

Cogwhistle gestures magically and concentrates for a bit before he vanishes from sight. His invisibility spell up, Cogwhistle starts walking out of the road. Getting hit by a car while invisible would suck, and suck *hard*. The rest scout the empty streets up and down before they get into cover near the dumpster, waiting for Schneider to work her breaking & entering magic.

A few minutes later, Schneider's work is done. Carefully pulling aside the cut section of the fence and securing the wires with a plastic zip tie, she steps through the largeish hole in the fence. Seconds later, the rest pass through the hole – Vince's large frame on his hands and knees, crawling through the hole. The huge troll is surprisingly nimble, despite his frame.



Schneider climbs to a high vantage point, perching herself precariously on the edge of the roof in order to avoid stepping on the gravel on the roof. Dr. Farsight joins her on the roof, extricating his compound bow and stringing it in a few seconds of smooth work.

Jinx hustles along to some close containers, climbing up them to further survey the area and have overlapping fields of fire with her other runner chummers. Also, with a bit of luck, there might be a suitably explody target for her grenades. Adjusting her MGL-6 grenade launcher, she quickly shimmies over to the roof of a warehouse, nimbly avoiding the gaping hole in the roof of the warehouse.

The troll and the dwarf, unlikely pair that they are, and still somewhat covered by the invisibility spell, shuffle over to some cover behind some containers. One is slightly too ... *stout* to climb well, the other's just too heavy.

1-02: Preparing the Battlefield is Half the Battle, Or So I've Been Told

Carefully surveying the docks, Schneider's eyes light up when she sees the large, electric forklift parked slightly away from the semi-trailer being loaded. The Saeder-Krupp logo on the crates being loaded from the ship to the waiting semi-trailer gives Dr. Farsight pause. Though it is a tempting target, he is reminded by the story of how to capture greedy monkeys.

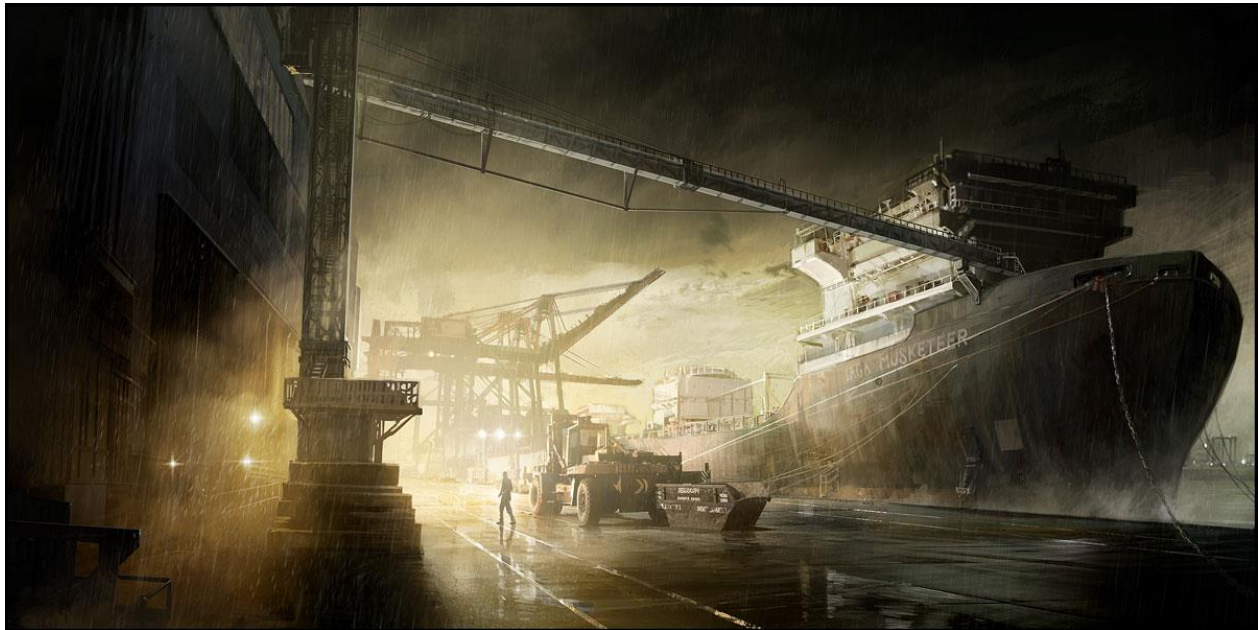
Put a jar in the ground, and cookies in the jar. The monkey, making a fist to grab the cookie, discovers that its hand is too big for the mouth of the jar, and is easily captured. He wonders at the contents of the crates. If Saeder-Krupp made it or wants it, it's likely valuable. But still, making enemies of a great dragon is never, ever a good idea... Torn between greed and common sense, Dr. Farsight keeps a vigilant watch over his chummers utilizing his vantage point. Schneider quietly slips down from the roof, and finds a different vantage point.





Jinx continues on her way across the roofs, aiming for the conveyor belt that is auspiciously positioned towards the large cargo ship. The name of the ship – Saga Musketeer – is just visible on the side of the ship.

A shadow on the roof, silhouetted towards the night sky, Jinx in a somewhat precarious position – but no dock hand ever looks up when there's crates to move, and night bonuses to earn. She makes her way to the conveyor belt apparently undetected. With a slight giggle, she takes out her demolitions kit, and starts booby-trapping the conveyor belt. Why? *Because of reasons.*



Schneider stealthily creeps to the large, but neglected forklift. Verifying that the ignition is nothing more than a large on-off switch, she thinks she's found transportation. Perhaps not the most anonymous of transportation, but beggars can't be choosers. The huge forklift would certainly be capable of holding two crates, 300 kg barely scratching its prodigious load capacity.





Schneider takes out her electronics kit, grabbing the roll of black electrician's tape in there, and starts masking off the position lights of the forklift. If and when the forklift's needed, turning the ignition shouldn't be revealed by the position lights suddenly turning on. It being an electric forklift, it should otherwise be quiet enough.

Dr. Farsight nimbly climbs down from the administration building, and gets a new vantage point closer to the action. The troll and the dwarf, still looking somewhat undecided, observe the warehouse right next to the one with the huge hole in the roof. That's their target, and so far everything's quiet. Still, some sixth sense seems to be holding them off just going to the warehouse door and grab their cargo. It's as if they're all waiting for something... just...

"Contact!" Dr. Farsight's harsh, clipped voice suddenly crackles over their comm. "Limo is approaching gate. Running dark, low-light headlights. Seems like we've got company."

1-02: Smash and Grab by Proxy

As if on cue, the security gate just opens when the limo approaches – as if it is expected. Boldly, the limo rapidly approaches the warehouse. And, of course, despite the hopes of the watching runners, it stops right outside of the same warehouse where the crates are supposed to be.

It's a really nice car. It is rare to see European luxury vehicles in Seattle, and even more rare to see a Mercedes top of the line stretched limo pull up in front of a somewhat grimy warehouse on the docks at night. Doors pop open, and two razor kings quickly and smoothly exit the car.



Both are Hispanic, and both are wearing shades – despite it being dark. One pulls out a heavily modified, silenced pistol. The other pulls out a heavily modified, suppressed SMG. Apart from their weapon choice, they look as if they could be brothers. Heavily armed, cybered brothers.



Both cover their firing arcs smoothly and professionally while they backpedal towards the warehouse security door. Without hesitation, Handgunrazor points his weapon straight up. A silenced *pfft* later, the LED light above the security door is shut off. The hard way. The razors take up position on either side of the now darkened security door.

It is quiet for a moment. The driver's door pops open, and out comes a goblin – dressed as a driver. The glint of at least one datajack on his little temple can just barely be seen under his stylish driver's hat. But this driver's heavily armed – carrying a short but nasty assault rifle in his white-gloved hands. Carrying the weapon as if it was light as a feather, the goblin smoothly moves over to the passenger door facing the warehouse.

Popping it open and stepping back, he is soon eclipsed by the towering form of a very large and massive man with a light brown fedora and a matching trenchcoat that gingerly steps out of the car. Looking down on the ground, the man pauses slightly, and *stretches* – as if his massive frame isn't massive enough to contain him.

Snapping out of the trance-like inaction that seems to have grasped everyone on his side, Cogwhistle decides that he has a better vantage point on a different plane of existence – the astral. “Going astral”, is the terse message when he sits down, and suddenly slumps bonelessly into a heap. Vince, the troll, pulls out his bo stick.

He'll stand guard over the little guy while he's out. Wistfully, Vince looks around to make sure that there's nothing untoward going on. He's a very well-read troll, and magical theory is a particularly fascinating subject for him. However, he's not magical – and is, in fact, *massively* augmented. Not for the first time, he wonders what the little dwarf is seeing in the astral.

Cogwhistle's astral body, his ideal of himself, might surprise his chummers if they ever saw it. Rising up, he surveys the area. Vince, the troll, is positioned over his meat body. Cogwhistle imagines a “vacancy” sign over his slumped meat body, and chuckles to himself. He marvels at how little is left of the *essence* of Vince, how *insubstantial* he seems on the astral plane, as compared to the massive reality in the real world.

Carefully, Cogwhistle's astral body rises on unseen wings, no longer shackled by gravity. He looks over to the limo, noting the dimmed shadows of the two razors standing on either side of the door into the warehouse. Enhanced, both with bioware and cyberware. No surprise there.

The goblin looks looks enhanced too, both with bioware and with cyberware. Of particular interest, however, is the quickened spell threaded through his aura. It looks like some sort of compulsion spell, but the magic's beyond the grasp of the dwarf. The dwarf feels a chill go down his metaphysical spine. If he was back in meat world, his neck hair would bristle. Quickened spells are not common. With some trepidation, he looks over at the man with the fedora.

The man with the fedora... is a log. An actual tree stump. Perched on top of the tree stump, a small, faintly glowing Viking is perched, attentively watching the dwarf's astral body. A spirit!



Cogwhistle's mind snaps into razor sharp focus. Before the watcher can do more than – well, *watch* – the energies of a spell swirls through the dwarf's astral body, *ripping* into the watcher. Before the little spirit can do anything, it is completely blown apart by the lethal intent of the mana bolt Cogwhistle grounds through it. The man with the fedora, the moving log... moves with purpose towards the security door, oblivious to the astral fireworks taking place.

The goblin scampers over to the security door. Pulling out a passkey, he jimmys the door expertly – and opens it before the man with the fedora reaches the door. The man with the fedora moves *heavily* towards the door, as if he's much heavier than he looks. Dr. Farsight startles while observing the man with the fedora – it is as if the fedora clad man's eyes or face are *emitting* reddish light... but that doesn't make sense.

With a solid-sounding thump, the door closes. The razor kings never twitch. And an impromptu plan is set into motion.

1-02: A Sudden Ambush

Whether it's greed, blood lust or something else isn't clear. However, one thought is shared among all – *this is an opportunity*. The razors seem to be happy guarding the warehouse's security door. The limo seems empty, or at least passive. One never knows with advanced robotics these days. Nevertheless, some quiet jostling of position starts.



Dr. Farsight is prone on the roof of the container stack he's chosen. He's laid out a handful of arrows, ready on the container's rough and rusty surface. Gingerly, he removes some of his special arrowheads. The clear liquid in the automatic plunger looks innocuous enough. Nevertheless, he is careful to not accidentally prick himself when he removes the fragile plastic protection over the robust needle. To do so would be ... *bad*. In hungry anticipation, his magic fills his body with its warmth, making him faster, his senses more acute, his aim more accurate.

Vince is very carefully stretching his back and ever so slightly cricking his neck. His prodigious mouth is perhaps ever so slightly dry. No stranger to combat, it's still the anticipation that's the worst. He tightens the hold on his bo. Were it wood, it might creak. Such as it is, the impact-resistant plastic bears the abuse without any sound. With an incongruous grace, the huge troll edges closer to the corner of the container. Cyberware and bioware systems initiate, preparing for the onslaught of action that is in the near future. Vince crouches down, and waits for the signal. He's pretty sure he'll know what the signal is when it happens, whatever *it* is.

Cogwhistle's mind enters his body again. He stands up quietly, no longer a boneless heap on the ground. It's as if his aura makes a shrug, to properly position itself in his body again. Cogwhistle looks at the huge troll that crouches at the nearby corner of the container. The dwarf quietly shuffles over to his huge chummer. He tries to calm the butterflies in his stomach, and prepare himself. For what, he's not quite sure.

Schneider's humming along quietly. She's done masking off the position lights of the large, electric forklift. Now, as tension mounts, she makes her way over to the operator's hut of the forklift. She toggles the switch and sees the lights on the control board light up in their power on self test. Green lights across the board. That must be good, *neh?* Wondering whether she's sussed out the unfamiliar controls properly, she grips the steering joystick. Quietly, the forklift shudders into life. Quietly and slowly, she starts maneuvering the forklift along the side of the warehouse, opposite to the razors. The magic around her is quiet, calm, collected. If combat happens, it'll happen, and Schneider will be ready. For now, however, the task at hand is driving the not quite inconspicuous forklift to somewhere where it can be of use.

Jinx is happily though quietly skipping along the corrugated roof of the warehouse. Leaving the conveyor belt to the ship booby-trapped by her improvised explosives, she carefully unslings her crossbow. Securing the bolt with the clip, she secures her grip on the weapon by tightly winding the sling around her forearm. Tiptoeing towards the edge of the warehouse roof directly above the two razors, she can feel tingling as her magic wakes up, almost *hungrily* augmenting her natural skill.

The pistol-wielding razor looks up, adjusting his grip on the weapon. What was that? A vague suspicion starts blossoming in his mind. He opens his mouth, perhaps to draw the attention of the other razor. No chance. Like a Jack-in-the-box from Hell, Jinx pops into his field of vision, crossbow at the ready. A bolt buries itself deep into his torso, standing up next to his neck like a perverse antenna. He topples forward, felled like a tree trunk, a shout of alarm dying on his lips, unconsciousness saving him from the pain from the bolt. His DocWagon bracelet winks on.



The SMG-wielding razor feels a momentary pang of confusion. *What was that?* Before his falling fellow razor fully registers, he sprouts an antenna of his own – an arrow deeply embeds itself in his shoulder. The burning pain is immediate, but more alarming is the spreading heat of something *extra* in the arrow head. A huge troll pops up into his field of vision, a bo staff *whistling* as it smacks into the razor's face with prodigious force. Were the staff wood, it would break. It isn't, so it's the face that breaks. The side of the razor's face immediately sags, the left orbital collapsed.

The razor still struggles with his SMG, trying to get it to bear on at least one enemy. He shrugs off a spell from Cogwhistle hammering into his head, *willing* it to disappear. Cogwhistle is faintly surprised by this – he thought the razor a weak-willed buffoon. Vince quickly reverses his grip on the bo staff, smoothly continuing his attack. The razor tries feebly to parry the vicious bo staff strike with his SMG. The bo staff *blasts* through the parry with inhuman force. Blessed unconsciousness saves the razor from more pain. His DocWagon bracelet winks on. The race between DocWagon and the accumulated damage from drugs and combat has started.

Somewhere in Seattle, an alarm goes off. A Gold contract and a Platinum contract bracelet has been triggered right next to each other, and within a couple of seconds of each other. A violent reason is assumed. The High Threat Response team on duty is scrambled as a matter of course. The v-thrust vehicle is airborne within two minutes.



En route, it becomes clear that there's been no reported traffic accident or anything else that would explain the two contracts triggered so close to each other. Weapons go hot. DocWagon is there to save lives, but is prepared to take lives to save those belonging to customers. Or perhaps even create more business, if necessary.



The Platinum bracelet reports foreign drugs in the system of the patient. Remotely, the medic triggers the patient's cybernetic blood filtration system to delay or neutralize the drugs, or at least analyze the foreign agent so that a suitable antidote can be ready when the patients are retrieved. "Street samurai", the medic muses while reviewing the cyberware and bioware installed in both patients. The list reads like a litany of controlled and illegal combat-related 'ware. Not much in the way of medical cyberware here.

She relays this to the HTR military commander, who acknowledges this with a nod. Gun drones are activated by the rigger, preparing them for immediate deployment when the v-thrust ambulance reaches its destination. This LZ is likely hot.

The medic watches the feed from the rigger, with an ETA countdown, while monitoring the lifesigns of the patients. She's hoping that none will flatline. That would be bad, both for her own morale and for DocWagon's bottom line. Both lifesign graphs are growing increasingly erratic. Willing the graphs to stay away from the dreaded flat line, the assault ambulance screams into the night towards the docks at a tremendous speed.

Both razors have barely toppled over when Vince notices the two triggered DocWagon bracelets. One Gold, one Platinum. His eyes widen slightly. Frag it, this'll be more difficult than he initially thought. A cursory patdown makes sure that both razors are apparently unarmed.

Dr. Farsight goes down on one knee, nocks an arrow, and starts looking for his next target from his vantage point. Cogwhistle walks over to the troll while looking around astrally – apparently worried about the man with the fedora. Schneider parks the forklift around the corner, while Jinx makes her way down from the corrugated roof of the warehouse.

On the other side of the warehouse, dock workers continue loading the semi-trailer with the enticing Saeder-Krupp crates, apparently oblivious to the fast and quiet ultraviolence that just took place only a couple of dozen meters away from them.

Vince grabs both razors by the scruff of their neck, one in each hand, and half drags half lifts them a few dozen meters away along the abandoned road. All the time, he imagines he can hear the aggressive whine of a DocWagon v-thrust vehicle. He assumes it'll be a HTR vehicle, because of the Platinum contract. He knows it'll just be a few minutes before they're here.

Jinx grabs the custom MP12 SMG and its holster with one extra clip, while Schneider grabs the Zenith heavy pistol and its holster with three extra clips. After that, Schneider makes her way over to the limo, and starts jimmying the passenger side front door to gain access to the vehicle. The top-notch security system of the limo makes this slow work.

Vince returns from stashing the two downed razors in an easy to reach location in an open area. A hush descends on the area. Jinx seems engrossed with her new, shiny SMG. Dr. Farsight keeps his head on a swivel, continuing his scout mission. Cogwhistle still looks worried. He hasn't seen neither hair nor hide of the goblin and the man in the fedora on the astral.



1-02: A Show of Force

A huge runic tablet, perhaps 3 meters in height and a couple of meters wide, shimmers into being in front of the security door of the warehouse like a cheap special effect in a trid movie of the week. Cogwhistle immediately recognizes this as a strange Spirit of Man. In a booming voice and with an odd, Scandinavian lilt, the spirit booms out “Do not attempt to attack me, on pain of death!”

Cogwhistle hammers a spell into the aura of the spirit. The spell flickers, and fizzles out with no apparent effect on the spirit. Though it doesn't have any eyes evident, Cogwhistle *feels* its gaze on him, heavy and evaluating. After a tense moment, the spirit fades.

Schneider decides that the limo's door lock will have to go, by hook or by crook. Drawing her sidearm, she unloads a full clip into the armored door of the limo, shattering the door lock. It pops open, and she looks inside of the vehicle. With a disgusted hiss, she slams the door semi-shut. No steering wheel, no pedals, no shifter – only the glittering, glassy cable of a datajack point. This limo seems to be rigged for cybernetic control only.

Suddenly, the security door is hammered out of its frame by tremendous force. The door takes air like an ungainly paper plane, tagging the limo with one edge before it flies off into the darkness, hitting the chain mesh fence with a meaty crash and then skittering away on the road in a spray of sparks.

Heavy footsteps can be heard from inside the warehouse. If possible, it sounds even heavier now than when the man with the fedora entered the building. The goblin scampers out first, rifle out but pointing towards the ground. The goblin's small, rat-like face is unreadable. He quickly makes his way towards the limo. The man with the fedora suddenly appears in the gaping hole where the security door used to be.

Bare-chested and bare-headed, he is obviously not human. His powerful physique is accentuated by his inhumanly jet-black skin. Runes that are slightly glowing are etched into every inch of available skin on his torso. The pointed ears might lead one to think of elves – but no known elf has blazingly red eyes emitting light. His samurai topknot is like a ponytail of pure copper down the nape of his neck.

Enveloped in a faintly glowing barrier, he confidently walks to the limo. The goblin has in the meantime gotten into the limo on the driver's side. The passenger door pops open as the nonhuman mage approaches the car. The mage gets into the limo, and it immediately glides off, the front passenger door with the destroyed lock slightly flopping in the breeze.

1-02: Grabbing the Package(s)

Leaping into action, the forklift is soon positioned outside the warehouse. Vince makes short work of carrying the cases to the forklift. One of the cases are ripped open, its steel packing bands ripped apart with such force that finger marks can be seen on the steel packing bands.



The crates are filled with small pocket secretaries of an unknown make and model, not yet individually packed for distribution. Two are missing from one of the crates. Jinx pockets one. “Three are missing”, she says. None make a fuss about it.

Sealing the open crate as best as he can, Vince makes a note of the packing address on the crate. Huh. It’s somewhere close to the Barrrens. He didn’t think there were any facilities there capable of making something like this. Vince then grabs the crates and subsequently carries them out to the waiting forklift. Jinx pops out her electronics kit and tries to pry open the small computer.



Weirdly, it seems as if it is fully glued together. Jimmying it open, she soon discovers why – the main processor looks to be a thin slice of brain suspended in a blue, thick gel and thoroughly wired to the motherboard of the device. To her enhanced senses, the smell coming from the device once when it was popped open is both intense and ... *wrong*, somehow. Dr. Farsight, climbing down to see what the commotion’s about, identifies the brain slice as being from a mammal of some sort.





Nobody wants to venture a theory as to why a slice of mammalian brain is wired into what appears to be a consumer electronics product. Pale, Cogwhistle mentions that even if the brain slice perhaps isn't exactly *alive*, it isn't exactly *dead* either. It has a presence on the astral plane, at least. Jinx puts the device together again.

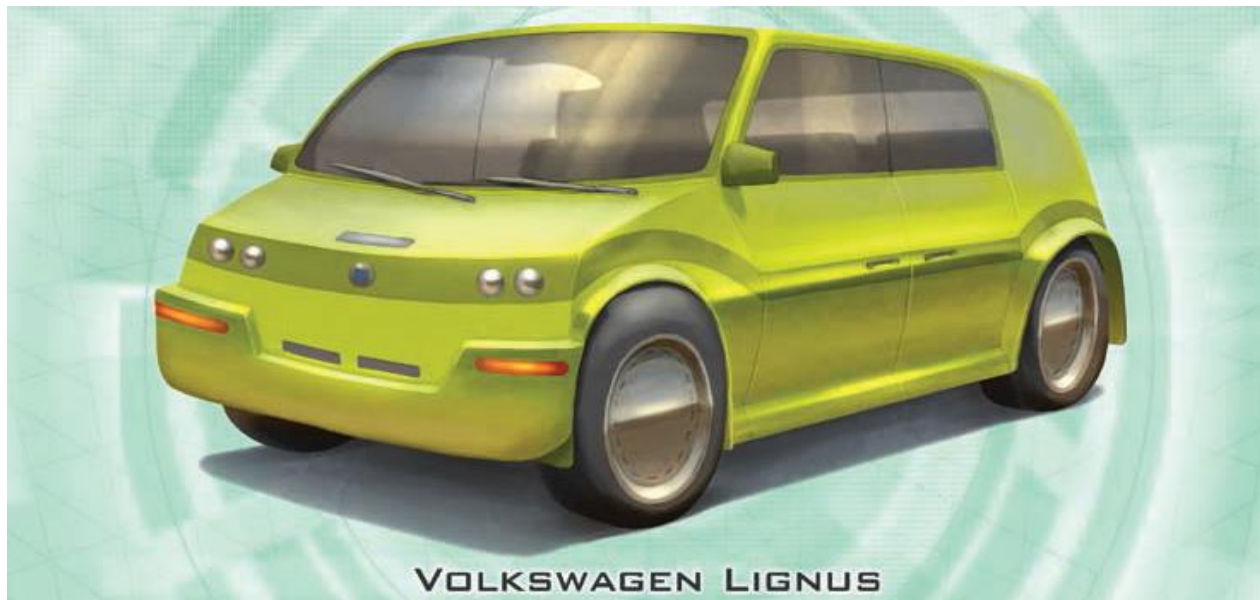
In the meantime, the DocWagon team has entered, deployed their forward screen, stabilized their patients, and taken off at full blast again with their gravely injured cargo. Nobody seems inclined to interfere with the medic's work. It might be the two suitcase-sized gun drones hovering above the assault ambulance, or the two guys with gyrostabilized light machineguns and medium security armor. Whichever it is, they're gone again after a couple of minutes. It is time to leave the docks, before more serious security arrives after the fence breach.

They all pile on to the forklift, and try their level best to make a huge forklift filled with armed and armored people look inconspicuous. It's late – or very early, depending on who you ask – and the streets are mostly deserted. Luckily. The drive to the garage where the rendezvous is supposed to take place is a quiet and miraculously uneventful drive.

1-02: Delivering the Package(s)

The forklift makes its way down the ramp into the underground garage. A van of European make stands there, three suited and mirror-shaded men with black gloves are waiting patiently. They could have been bald, almost identical brothers, only differentiated by their facial hair.

One rocks a soul patch, another a small bristle of a toothbrush mustache, and the last a full Fu Manchu. The man with the Fu Manchu speaks. He seems completely unperturbed by the appearance of a forklift in the underground garage. He speaks in a heavy, German accent. "Zis is ze crates, ja?"





Nodding assent, Vince unloads the crates from the forklift. “There were three items missing from one of the crates”, he ventures. “Zat is unfortunate. Zhere vill be consequences for the payment.” Vince bristles somewhat. “It wasn’t our fault! We did exactly as we were supposed to!” The man with the impressive facial hair looks at him through mirrored shades. “Zat is not relevant. *You* are not relevant.” A slight upturning of the nose indicates very *European* distaste.

With a snap of his gloved fingers, one of the other brothers spring into action. It is the one with the soul patch. Alone, he picks up one crate after the other, and load them into the van. He doesn’t seem to visibly exert himself, even though each crate weighs 150 kg – or a little less, in one instance. Slamming the rear van doors shut, he again positions himself with his two brothers, making up one of the points in a loose triangle with Fu Manchu-mustache running point.

Fu Manchu-mustache snaps his fingers again, and the man with the toothbrush mustache disappears behind the van. When he returns, he carries a small briefcase. He places it on the ground in front of the troll. Vince may be imagining things, but he imagines a *sniff* of distaste from toothbrush mustache. “Zis concludes our business. Ve vill now leave.” Fu Manchu-mustache turns on his heel, and all three enter the vehicle.

The van carefully and very properly drives out of the garage, loaded with three impeccably dressed men and their cargo of strange pocket secretaries.

With a shrug, Vince turns to the others. He picks up the small briefcase, and opens it. Inside are credsticks with twelve grand on them, one for each member of the team. Vince again wonders – briefly – where Ricardo went, and how the three suited men could know how many were in the team, or if it’s just a happy circumstance.

They abandon the forklift down here in the underground garage. It’s someone else’s problem now. Walking into the pre-dawn gray, they pull out their bus passes again. Seattle Public Transport Authority to the rescue. Again.

1-02: Loose Threads and Musings

20 grand for a simple ‘run is a lot of money. Someone really wanted these crates. But what on Earth *are* the devices? Who’s Ψ that makes them? Was the brain slices donated from a legitimate source, or is there something going on there as well? What’s on the address in the Barrens? Why were the crates in this warehouse at all? What’s the Scandinavian angle here, or was it a ploy? Did Mario know anything about this in advance? And can someone really be *that* German, in an age of languagesofts and everything else? Did the ship, the Saga Musketeer, enter into this at all? Is it really possible to use a stolen forklift as a getaway vehicle and get off scot free? Did one or both razors survive, and is it possible that they’ll be gunning for revenge?

And is there a cheaper deal for the Seattle Public Transport Authority if you buy more than three months’ worth of bus pass in one go?



Bonus map

